



Testimony in Support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Barbara Lopez and I live in New Haven, Connecticut. I stand in support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers. I am the Executive Director of Make the Road CT, an intergenerational member-led community organization working to build power in immigrant, Latinx, and working-class communities in Connecticut to achieve dignity and justice. We do this through community organizing, legal and survival services, transformative education, and policy innovation.

Currently, Connecticut's Medicaid program does not reimburse Community Health Worker (CHW) services or incentivize health care providers to work with CHWs. Community health workers are an effective way to address inequities and promote health, particularly for low-income households served by Medicaid. The membership of Make the Road CT is predominantly made up of low income, immigrant and Latinx families, many of whom are undocumented or mixed status. According to a recent survey we did of our membership, a staggering 75% of our members said they do not have health insurance. Even in families that do have health insurance, many do not go to the doctor for primary care because of barriers to care including not knowing or understanding how the healthcare system works, a lack of transportation, a lack of language justice/services not available in their language, and more. Community Health Workers bridge the huge gap between the healthcare system in this country and the community members who have not historically gotten care, by providing culturally competent, accessible information in our community's own languages.

At Make the Road we have recently hired Community Health Workers for this very reason. We know how important it is for our members to have high quality care and information in their own language, as well as assistance navigating the healthcare system. However, we are also finding it challenging to figure out how to sustainably fund this work, because it oftentimes feels like even though study after study shows how valuable CHWs are, they are often considered as an afterthought and not truly integrated into the traditional healthcare system.

Medicaid reimbursement for community health workers should:

- Center community and CHW voices in all stages of design and implementation
- Reimburse at rates high enough to employ CHWs at a livable wage and cover the costs of supervision, billing, and routine training
- Cover a comprehensive list of CHW services

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Lopez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Barbara Lopez
Executive Director
Make the Road CT